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The EDITH *and* LORNE PIERCE
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Queen's University at Kingston

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Letters from Sussex Emigrants gone out from the South Side of the Hills to Upper Canada.

Chichester: William Hayley Mason, East street, 1837.

Staton & Tremaine 1978
(Five letters, 1832-36, by immigrants, who went to Upper Canada under the auspices of the Petworth Committee.)

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INTRODUCTION.

The several Letters which have at different times been published by the Petworth Emigration Committee, have been almost exclusively from persons who had emigrated from that neighbourhood, or at least from the North side of the Hills; but as many Families have gone out also from the South side, a publication of some of their letters may be an object of greater interest to the Inhabitants of those Places, most of whom know the writers by name and some of whom are personally acquainted with them.

Numerous as such Letters are, which have been received during the last few years in all parts of Western Sussex, there is perhaps scarcely an exception to the fact, that contentment and satisfaction are the sum and substance of them. So that if the Emigration, thus set on foot, be considered as an experiment, to provide for some of those who were destitute, and to better the condition of the remainder by diminishing the number of competitors who must necessarily divide the Work with them: it would be difficult to adduce an instance of any similar experiment, which had turned out more undeniably successful.

Nevertheless in the commencement, and while the success was a calculation rather then a certainty; doubt and distrust arose in the minds of many to whom it was offered. In spite of want of work, and consequent privation which they were experiencing at home; they had not confidence and courage to venture Abroad: and every absurd story, invented by the ignorant or designing was sufficient to deter them.

Time and experience have now operated a total change in this particular, the concurring accounts of so many Friends and Acquaintances have converted the opinions of the most obstinate, and there is scarcely a Labourer in Western Sussex, but is fully aware that with health and willingness to work, he can instantly obtain comfort and abundance in America, and after 5 or 6 years, become the Purchaser and Proprietor of a small independent Farm. But the objections to Emigration which were heretofore on the side of those to whom it was proposed to undertake the Voyage have now only shifted their ground to the side of those whoare to pay for it. The doctrine is of late promulgated, that the excess of Labourers is less real, than imaginary. There is certainly some truth in the assertion—and as

when pushed to its fullest extent the Theory is agreeable, it is often hastily adopted, without submitting it to the test of examination.

That less excess exists than was generally imagined, the working of the new Poor Law has happily made manifest. Numbers who before claimed Parish work upon the Roads, on the plea that they must otherwise starve, have struck-out for themselves independent means of subsistance, now that the only alternative is the workhouse. But nevertheless where-ever there is a Parish, wherein no work can be obtained during the winter season for several of its *well disposed* Laborers, such Parish must be admitted in fairness to have a super-abundance of hands. The number in the Union Workhouse is not always a fair criterion for deciding this question—many remain out for weeks though earning nothing, in daily hopes that a better chance will turn up for them.

Where-ever also the wages of those constantly employed are insufficient, *when allowed to find their natural level,* to support a family in decent respectability and comfort, there does not exist that healthy proportion between labour and the demand for it, which a well-wisher to the community would desire to see. The wages of labour cannot properly be said to find their natural level, until every master hires his labourers at the lowest price for which he can obtain their services, competition being allowed its full influence in the transaction. But it is notorious that Farmers habitually look to the price of bread and other necessaries, and raise their wages *voluntarily* as these rise in price—fully conscious all the time that if they dealt with their Carters and Ploughmen as they would deal for an article in a shop or market, they could decidedly get the same work executed on lower terms. In this, they act both wisely and humanely; and a departure from such wholesome principles would in the long run, if not immediately, tend to the disadvantage of both parties. But still as long as this is the practice, and as long as it is thus customary and commendable to act with wages contrary to the general rule of dealing, and not to leave them to the full agency of competition—the proof is sufficient, that there is some redundancy in the labour market.

This redundancy may be neither great nor discouraging; and is probably in due course of diminution, now that early improvident marriages and illegitimate children are no longer encouraged by mistaken laws. But if any such redundancy be thus shewn, it must follow of course that Emigration is good, till the equilibrium be restored. And it is assuredly an additional aid towards the working of the new system, and a relief to the temporary pressure of it.

LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

Young Street, York, Upper Canada,
February 7, 1832.

My Dear Sister,

I now take the pleasure of writing you and stating our welfare. We are in perfect health, and most sincerely hope this will find you in the same condition. We like the country much better than we did at first, *because in this province an honest and industrious mechanic will always earn more than in England, and by a prudent course of conduct may soon become independent. George gets 7s 6d. Canada Currency per day,* in the summer season, but during the winter little work in his line of business (bricklaying) is to be had. We have no intention of an immediate return to England, *because in this beautiful colony of the British Empire industry and honesty will at all times procure a comfortable living. The taxes are very trifling,* and lands may be purchased at a moderate rate. We like most old country people, are, and ever will continue to be, affectionately attached to our friends and our native land. We may perhaps return to England, or should it prove otherwise, we shall be very glad to see our friends here, but desire to be distinctly understood to invite none, because they might after arrival feel dissatisfied with the manners and habits of the country, and thereby censure us for our good intentions. In a letter to you, dear Sister, we are to be understood as stating the language of truth.

If any of our friends should come to this country, we are of opinion *they would shew but little or no inclination to return to England, because here we have peace and plenty, and (which we sincerely lament to observe by the public prints) is not the case with you.*

If you shall receive this letter, my dear Sister, write to your Father and Mother, also to my Father and Mother, transmitting this letter, and desiring all our Friends (and we love them affectionately) to pay the inland postage of their letters to us, or to get them franked.

Such letters as your friends and mine wish to direct to us, you will have the goodness to send to Miss Emma Trew at Mr. G. Halsted's Walberton, as that young lady is expected to arrive at Quebec in the Spring, likewise respectfully desiring all letters for us to be addressed to the care of Thomas

E. Trew, Esq., Commissary, Quebec. At your desire combined with my own inclination and affection for you, I wrote to you on our arrival at Quebec, but to my surprise and disappointment have not received a single line from you. The reason is, I think, you had forgotten to pay the inland postage of your letters, without which they will not find their way to a distant colony.

We are extremely anxious to hear how you all do, and whether Fanny is gone to Gibraltar or not. We have written three letters and others but received no answers. We sincerely desire you and all friends will write us without fail. From yourself we look for a letter in the spring, and surely it will contain as much news as the bounds of a single sheet will contain. We have not for the last 5 months seen either James or Mark Ruel or Jorden. We left them at Quebec and have reason to think they have gone to the United States.

Desiring you to remember us very kindly and affectionately to all enquiring friends, We remain, dear Eliza, your affectionate brother and sister,

GEORGE and EMILY WELLS.

To Miss Wells, Walberton.

LETTER II.

Thornhill, Young Street, Nov. 8, 1835.

DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER,

This comes with my kind love to you, hoping that these few lines will find you in good health, as it leaves me at present, thanks be to God. We landed in York on the 25th of June, after a nine weeks passage. The 29th of May we saw the first land after we left England, covered with snow. When we arrived Thomas Messenger came on board the steamer and gave directions where to find George Wells and the two Birchs, and I have been at work for George Wells ever since. Cole is working just bye, and Charles Leggatt is working about three miles from here. Now we have had £2 10*s*. a month ever since we have been here and *our board*, so we have nothing to get but clothes. Dear Father and Mother we have a Church and every thing as comfortable as we can wish, and I like the country very well at present, it is far better than being beholden to the Parish. But in my next letter I shall be able to tell you more about it, after I have been here a winter. Mr. Birch, Mrs. Norris, G. Wells and all the Walburton people live close together. James Birch is married to Frances

Viney, from Climping. Remember me to J. Ayling, R. Suter, and Master and Mrs. Millyard. I have not seen George Suter yet, but I have heard that he was 50 miles from here. I can assure you that any one can get a good living here if he will work. So to conclude I send my kind love to you all, so no more at present from your affectionate son,

FRANK MELLISH.

Remember G. Wells and Family to his father and mother Direct to me at G. Wells' Thornhill, Young Street, Toronto.

To William Mellish—Walberton.

LETTER III.

Thornhill, April 13, 1836.

Dear Uncle and Aunt,

I take opportunity of writing these few lines, hoping they will find you as well as when we left, I am happy to tell you we are all well, and doing well at present, I like this country surprisingly. We were nine weeks on our passage, and had a very rough one. Give my love to brother Ben and sister Jane, I do not persuade them to come out, but if they should come, they would do a great deal better here than at home. I had to go thirteen miles after I had left the ship to my sons' and there I found a good home; they came to meet me when I landed. I have got a good place, farming for an English gentleman, my wages are £4 2s 6d per month.—Give my love to Thomas Burch and his wife, and I hope they are as well as when we left. I hope you will write as soon as possible, and if any of you like to come out, you would do better than at home—but I will not persuade you. Little George bids me tell you, some one cut his pockets and took his sixpence. Ask Ben if he has seen anything of George, I should like to hear of him—when you write I should like to hear of my old master, tell him this is a good place for farmers, but they must not think to do here as they do at home, telling men if they do not like it they may go, for the masters here must humble more to the men, than the men to the master.

I should like to hear from all my aunts and uncles, how they are, and how they are doing, for we are all well and doing well, and likely to do well. You may ask my sister, Winn, if she recolleets what she said on Yapton Bridge, when I said I hoped to do better here; she said, she wished I might find it so; tell her I do find so; all I am sorry for is, that I did not come sooner. Frank Mellish is well, and doing well; Charles Leggatt is well and doing well, he makes my house or my son's

house his home. William Cole is with George Wells, he is very well. Tell Mr. Jay I have not heard anything of Henry Jay, nor my son that came out before me. Edmund & James send their love to uncle, he must tell George Blackman not to think we sent for father and mother to eat one another. Remember Edward to George Ostand, Instead of eating one another as *George Blackman said*, I can buy a whole Hog at a time. Direct to me Thornhill, George Street, Upper Canada. Tell Thomas Falkner we have better windows here than he has in his church. I must conclude with best wishes for your welfare—your affectionate nephew and niece,

MARY & EDWARD BURCH.

To Mr. George Burch, thatcher.

LETTER IV.

Thornhill, Young Street, July 24, 1836.

Dear Father and Mother,

I take the pleasure of writing a few lines to you hoping by the blessing of God it will find you all well, as I am happy to say it leaves me at present, thank God for it. Dear Father and Mother, we had a very fine voyage indeed, we were six weeks coming to Quebec; we had no rough weather except two or three days, the 2nd and 3rd of May, when the sea was very rough. I was sea sick three days and so we were all, but poor Jemmy Millyard was sick for three weeks, he was very bad indeed. But I should not care no more of coming over the water than I should of going over the sheep-wash. On the 10th of May we saw icebergs and we saw nearly fifty, and on the 25th of May we had snow four inches thich on the deck, and we snow balled one another till we got wet through.

Dear brother Henry, I wish you was here my boy, but stop till next spring and come out with Bob, and don't hire till you get up to me, for you don't know who you may hire with. Dear friend, when we landed at Toronto, we were walking up the Town, and we went to where Mark Messenger lived, and we went up to his house and slept there that night, and we came up to Thornhill the next day with Edmund Birch, he goes down to Toronto every day, so we got up to George Lintot with Edmund and we stopt with George that week, and we have all got work.

George Leggatt is at work about one mile from Thornhi he have 8 dollars a month and his meat.

John Norris and George Booker is about ten miles from George Lintot, George has ten dollars, and John eight dollars a month.

George Cole is with George Wells.

Charles Richards is about four miles from George.

James Millyard is eleven miles from here, he is gone prentieed to a Carpenter.

Thomas Norris has got a place, and has hired for a month.

Richard Cooper is at work for Mark Messenger and Cornelius Cook is at work at Toronto, he hired the second day we landed, and John Ewens he hired at Toronto as a Butcher's boy, he has not been up to Thornhill at all.

Ruth Leggatt is with Edmund Birch, and I have hired up at Newmarket for eleven dollars. I have got a very good place about eighteen miles from George Lintot. I got a horse and came down to write this letter home, but I must get back to night. I have been at farming work, and been a mowing a day or two and a shoveling about, I don't work hard, but I lives very well, that is £2 15*s*, a month and my board and lodgings, that is better than working in England. There is Charles Leggat and William Cole and all the Birch's, Henry Norris and wife and two children, George Wells, B. Lintot, George Lintot and wife is quite well, they have one child. Frank Mellish and all is quite well, and all close together, makes quite a little Walberton all together. Never be afraid to come to America, don't be afraid to come, you will do better here. Give my love to Robert and all enquiring friends. When you write direct to me at George Lintot's, Thornhill, Upper Canada. I will write soon and tell Bob all about it. Give my love to all, and write again soon.

Mr. William Ayling, JOHN AYLING.
Walburton, Sussex, near Arundel, England,
by way of New York.

LETTER V.

Plympton, half-past 7 o'clock, Monday Night, Feb. 8, 1836.

Dear Sir—I received your letter in Sept. I am sorry to hear the sad state that England is in, I think you had better come to this country if you wish to be independent of any other man—a man in this country have no business, to.....for any body but his self after he have been in th s country three years if he is industrious. We are now living on our own produce, pork is scarce in this township—we have just killed a Sow that weighed about 250lbs...we have 3 young sows, about 5 months old, so we shall have plenty another year, and every thing that we wish for—we have a yoke of Steers to break in the spring, 2 good cows and 2 calves a year

old—we have no mill in the township as yet, we are sawing the timber for one to be built in the summer, it is a long road to one—we have plenty of sawing handy home about half-a-mile, and from that to 5 miles more than we can do, but thank God we shall not want to do any much longer. Tell ThomasWest he should not fail in coming, for it will be the best thing he ever done for himself—when first I came I thought I would go back to England, but I got acquainted after a little and thought no more about it—if Thomas West comes out and thinks of getting land, he had better come up pretty handy to us, for it is good land, but if he do not mean to farm, labour, I think, is better further down the country; but if a man wishes to do good for himself he had better farm—but tell him not to take cleared farms at halves, for there is plenty would let farms at halves, or so much a year, it is a bad plan, for when you leave it you are no better than when you first came to this country, but when you clear a farm yourself it is your own.—here is trouble you will find when you come to this country for 2 or 3 years and then you will begin to be comfortable. We have 9 acres of land to clear off in the spring, we have 6 acres of wheat sewed—we have built a barn 32ft long, 22 wide—we had good crops of every thing last year that we could wish for—Father's family is small now, only 4 at home besides myself and Absolom—we have 240 acres of land amongst us—Eliza lives at her old place still—tell Grandmother, Reuben is a good thrasher—Mother and Eleanor have many a battle about the barn, she is so fond of thrashing she cannot keep her out of the barn, here is not hardly a man in the township that can thrash as much as them two. Apples about 40 miles from us have been selling at 2d per bushel all this last year—you take 2 barrels they will fill one with cider for you for the empty one, and as many as you like on the same terms. Provisions are not so cheap as when we came, but cheaper than in England—they have been bringing fresh pork from Upper Canada and selling 4d per lb, and it is getting lower—flour 6½ dollars for 196lbs—tell Thomas West if he comes to bring some seeds such as clover and grass—plum stones and apple pips. Yours &c. &c.

TIMOTHY TRUSSLER.*

P.S. If ThomasWest comes I wish he would bring me ½ doz sacks, ½ doz Birmingham reap hooks, a prong that will answer for a pitch prong or barn & a hog killing knife & I will pay him.

To Mr. William Luff, Sawyer,
Farnhurst Cross, Sussex,
Near Haslemere, Surrey, Old England.

* Emigrated with his father John Trussler and his uncle George Trussler and their wives and families, twenty individuals in all, from Steep, Hants, in a Ship sent by the Petworth Committee in 1833. (Mason, Printer.